



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

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Qs & As

August 2003

CARES Commission Hearings

What is the CARES Commission role?

The CARES Commission is an independent commission chartered with the responsibility to provide the Secretary with recommendations on the Under Secretary for Health's Draft National CARES Plan. In making its recommendations, the Commission will consider written comments from all stakeholders and hold public hearings to gather input from organizational representatives.

How were individuals selected to present oral testimony to the CARES Commission?

The Commission worked with the VISNs to identify potential witnesses in the categories of employee organizations, academic affiliates, state and local officials, collaboration relationships (such as with DOD, VBA, or NCA), and other groups with an interest/involvement in the CARES process at the VISN-level (such as historical societies with an interest in VA property). When appropriate, the Commission contacted the [national] organizations or involved entities for guidance.

For VSO witnesses, the Commission contacted the national offices and asked for names for each hearing. From the names submitted, the Commission selected witnesses to invite to appear.

Only state and local officials who were substantially involved in the CARES process were invited to testify. As a result, relatively few such witnesses have been invited.

Can stakeholders who are not selected to present oral testimony provide written testimony?

Within 10 calendar days after a hearing, individuals can submit written comments on issues raised during the hearing. In addition, comments may be submitted on the Draft National Plan until October 7, 2003, during the 60-day period after its publication in the Federal Register.

Comments on issues raised during a hearing or the draft plan may be submitted by fax at (202) 501-2196, through the Commission Web site at <http://www.carescommission@va.gov> or by writing to:

CARES Commission
[Marked "Comments"]
Richard E. Larson, Executive Director
Department of Veteran Affairs (00CARES)
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420.

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Will computers be available at hearing sites for those who wish to prepare written testimony?

Yes. VISNs will supply computer(s) and computer operator(s). Blank forms will also be available at the hearings for those who want to write their comments. Individuals also can send comments to the Web or mailing address shown above.

Will written testimony be reviewed and considered by the Commission in its deliberations?

Yes. Written comments will be considered.

Will written comments be recorded as part of the public record subject to the FOIA?

Comments will be compiled and maintained as part of the public record of the Commission. They will be available under FOIA.

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